DISRUPTING THE COMMONPLACE:

CRITICAL LITERACY PRACTICES IN THE ESL READING CLASSROOM

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Abstract

This critical qualitative research study explored the possibility of drawing on critical literacy in the Intensive English Program (IEP) classroom, specifically using ESL reading texts as learning materials for its practices. Five ESL participants recruited from the IEP at a major US Midwestern university engaged in critical literacy practices, which consisted of eight group discussion sessions about the content and points of view of selected ESL texts. Audio- and video-recorded discussion data were analyzed through the four dimensions model, used as both conceptual and analytical frameworks for this study. Based on the findings, this research study offers ESL/IEP educators a variety of effective strategies to promote ESL students' critical engagement with their texts, specifically to help them disrupt the commonplace.

Keywords: critical literacy, ESL reading, reading as a social practice, Intensive English Program

In the English as a Second Language (ESL) field, language learning is frequently seen as a context-neutral process based on psycholinguistic approaches (Firth & Wagner, 2007; Kramsch, 2000; VanPatten, 1999). However, not only schooling but also classrooms in which language learning takes place are by nature not neutral but political (Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991; Apple, 1993; Auerbach, 1995; Luke & Freebody, 1997; Morgan, 1998; Pennycook, 2001). Auerbach (1995) suggests that students are routinely exposed to political or ideological content in learning materials such as textbooks without their awareness.

Similarly, ESL textbooks may implicitly represent the dominance of cultural values of English-speaking countries, including ideological content serving their interests. Therefore, to address the content of ESL textbooks, which may be ideological and thus unfair in terms of social justice and equity, it is important for students to have the opportunity to critically analyze ESL textbooks, drawing on critical perspectives such as critical literacy practice.

A review of the literature indicates that a considerable amount of research into critical literacy has been conducted in US or Australian mainstream classes such as social studies (McCall, 2002; Schramm-Pate & Lussier, 2003; Wolk, 2003) or language arts (Bean & Moni, 2003; Cadeiro-Kaplan, 2002; Foss, 2002), in which English is the primary native language. However, only a moderate amount of research has focused on critical literacy in the ESL classroom (Alford, 2001), and there is no research into critical literacy in the intensive English program (IEP) context.

Accordingly, in this critical qualitative research study, I explored the possibility of drawing on critical literacy in the IEP classroom, specifically using ESL reading texts as learning materials for its practices. I employed Lewson et al.'s (2002, 2008) *four dimensions model*, which is discussed in more detail in later sections, as both conceptual and analytical frameworks for critical literacy practices. The specific focus of this article is on one of the four dimensions, *disrupting the commonplace*.

CONNECTING CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES WITH THE ESL CLASSROOM

Because this study attempts to link critical literacy with the ESL context, I address critical perspectives toward education. Kincheloe (2004) argues that language is not a neutral means to describe the world but "an unstable social practice whose meaning shifts, depending upon the context in which it is used.…linguistic descriptions are not simply about the world but serve to construct it" (p. 55) and that language serves to legitimize specific knowledge through *discursive practices* defined as "a set of tacit rules that regulate what can and cannot be said, who can speak with the blessings of authority and who must listen, whose social constructions are valid and whose are erroneous and unimportant" (p. 55).

Freire (2000) argues that students' awareness that they need a struggle for liberation or humanization is the result of *conscientization*, by which students can engage in critical reflection on their situations and take action for social change. He emphasizes that such awareness is not provided by the teacher but rather students themselves should raise it as subjects of social action. He also argues that dialogue is the correct method which the teacher can employ in the classroom because it can promote its participants' critical reflection and social action to transform and humanize the world.

Kincheloe's idea of the ideological nature of language highlights that language used in ESL textbooks may serve to legitimize specific knowledge through discursive practices such as reading practices or teaching and learning practices in the classroom. On the other hand, Freire accentuates the need to engage students with critical reflection and social action, especially through dialogue.

Pennycook (2001) suggests that in order to illuminate the nature of the ESL classroom, the dichotomous relation between *macro* and *micro*, in other words, *structure* and *agency,* should be taken into account. He argues that, although the ESL classroom is located within the macro social and political structure, human agency can be enhanced in it, stressing that the relationship between structure and agency is not deterministic but rather reciprocal in that ESL

students can negotiate and create various forms of power through their everyday words and actions. I support Pennycook's idea about the relationship between structure and agency in that he argues for a reciprocal rather than a deterministic relationship. Without agency, we cannot explain how students can become transformative beings who can actively engage in critical reflection and social action.

To sum up, language is not a neutral means to simply mirror the world but rather a social practice to construct it, especially serving to legitimize specific knowledge of the dominant group through discursive practices. Similarly, ESL textbooks may include ideological representations through their content, and such ideological content can be legitimized through discursive practices such as ESL classes. In the ESL classroom, students are not just passive receivers of such ideologically represented knowledge but rather they, as social agents, can create, challenge, and reconstruct it, especially by promoting their critical reflection through dialogue. Given these ideas, ESL students are encouraged to engage in critical literacy practice because it conceptualizes language as a social practice and promotes ideology critique and critical reflection through dialogue.

THE FOUR DIMENSIONS MODEL

Lewison, Flint, and Van Sluys (2002) developed the four dimensions model of critical social practice. According to the model, critical social practices consist of four interwoven dimensions: *disrupting the commonplace concerned with problematizing our common life through critical lenses; considering multiple viewpoints concerned with understanding issues from multiple perspectives including others' viewpoints, focusing on the sociopolitical such as* moving beyond the personal toward the social or questioning unequal power relationships; and *taking action to promote social justice such as participating in social action or exercising power through language* (pp. 382-384).

Based on the four dimensions of critical social practices, Lewison, Leland, and Harste (2008) developed a model of critical literacy instruction, which consists of three elements (pp. 5-21): *personal and cultural resources,* referred to as resources such as personal

experience, social issues, popular culture/media, or textbooks students and teachers can use in order to design the critical literacy curriculum; *critical social practices* including the four dimensions mentioned above; and *critical stance* as "the attitudes and dispositions we take on that enable us to become critically literate beings" (p. 13). As a key concept in the model of critical literacy instruction, these scholars emphasize that a critical literacy curriculum moves between the personal and the social in both directions. For instance, when engaging in critical literacy practices, students can start with personal experiences linking them to social issues, and on the contrary, they can start by reading about social issues moving to their personal experiences.

To analyze the data on critical social practices, I employed the four dimensions model (Lewison et al., 2002, 2008) because this model is concrete and inclusive in that it was developed through reviewing and synthesizing a range of definitions of critical literacy proposed over a 30-year period. I identified and classified critical social practices in terms of the four dimensions: disrupting the commonplace, considering multiple viewpoints, focusing on the sociopolitical, and taking action to promote social justice. This article focuses specifically on the dimension of disrupting the commonplace.

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH SITE AND PARTICIPANTS

The main purpose of the study was to explore the possibility of drawing on critical literacy in the ESL classroom, specifically in the college level Intensive English Program (IEP). Therefore, I recruited ESL participants studying in the IEP at a US Midwestern university. Because critical literacy emphasizes the promotion of multiple perspectives (Davies, 1997; Lewison et al., 2008; Luke, 2000; McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004), I intentionally recruited five participants who had nationality and gender differences in order to promote multiple perspectives in group discussions by encouraging them to use their different social and cultural background knowledge. Table 1 shows the five participants' background profiles including gender, nationality, English proficiency levels, and length of study in the IEP.

Table 1.

Participants' Profiles

Name	Gender	Nationality	English Proficiency Level	Length of Study in the IEP
Daniela	Female	Columbia	High Intermediate	4 months
Hanan	Female	Saudi Arabia	Advanced	8 months
Kiwoo	Male	Korea	High Intermediate	18 months
Pang	Male	Taiwan	Advanced	8 months
Yelda	Female	Turkey	High Intermediate	2 months

Note. All participants' names are pseudonyms.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

Because my study attempted to apply critical literacy to pre-set ESL reading texts, I tried to find ESL reading textbooks which had been used in the IEP in which participants were enrolled. The following four ESL reading textbooks, published by popular ESL book publishing companies, were identified:

> A. Broukal, M., & Murphy, P. (2008). All about the USA 3: A cultural reader (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Pearson Education. (B&M)
>
> B. Brown, K., & Hood, S. (2002). Academic encounters: Life in society. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. (B&H)
>
> C. Lee, L., & Gundersen, E. (2001). Select readings intermediate. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. (L&G)
>
> D. Williams, J. (2007). Academic encounters: American studies. New York: Cambridge University Press. (WJ)

Next, I selected seven texts from the four ESL reading textbooks. I strove to include a variety of texts in terms of genres and styles in order to promote multiple perspectives and intertextuality referred to as the relationships that two or more texts form in a variety of ways, for example, by assimilating or contradicting each other (Fairclough, 1992). As shown in Table 2, I included in the curriculum for critical

literacy practices different topics, including two popular commercial products, social issues such as gender roles in the media and TV violence, personal stories such as culture shock and a love story, and Native American history.

Table 2.

Seven Selected Texts and Their Brief Descriptions

Selected Texts (Title)	Book (Authors)	Descriptions
Coca-Cola	A (B&M)	As one of a series of texts addressing American culture, the text introduces the commercial product "Coca-Cola."
Kellogg's Corn Flakes	A (B&M)	As one of a series of texts addressing American culture, the text introduces the commercial product "Kellogg's Corn Flakes."
Gender Roles in the Media	B (B&H)	As part of a chain of texts regarding the issues of gender and sexuality in the US, the text addresses gender roles in the media.
Television and Children	B (B&H)	As part of a chain of texts regarding the media and their influence, the text addresses TV and its influence on children.
Culture Shock	C (L&G)	As one of the select readings in the textbook, the text, one of the articles in the newspaper, *The Boston Globe*, addresses culture shock.
Private Lives	C (L&G)	As one of the select readings in the textbook, the text is a personal essay that addresses the author's story of a place, one of the Florida beaches.
America's First People	D (WJ)	The text describes Native American history, specifically the process of European colonization in North America.

Note. The books and author(s) are the alphabetical order and the abbreviations in the booklist shown above.

Then, for critical literacy practices, the five participants and I had discussion sessions outside of their regular IEP classes. We had eight discussion sessions, each of which took place in a group study room located in the main library once a week for about one to one-and- a-half hours. All the sessions were audio and video recorded. Except for the last session, when they reflected on all seven texts, the participants were given one of the seven selected texts in each group discussion session and discussed the following guiding questions:

- What do you think or how do you feel about the content of the reading text? Why do you think so?

- Is there any part of the text that you like or prefer? If so, why?

- Is there any part of the text that you don't like or disagree with? If so, why?

- What genres can you see in the text?

- What styles are drawn upon in the text?

- Whose voices are missing or excluded?

- How did you feel about today's discussion?

- What was the most interesting part in today's discussion?

- What did you learn through the discussion?

The first three questions, as the main guiding questions, aimed to link a given text with participants' feelings and thoughts whereas the second three questions focused more on encouraging them to address the social relation between the author and the reader by discussing genres, styles, and voices. The last three questions were asked to help participants to reflect on their feelings and thoughts concerning the discussion and also what they thought they learned. In each discussion session, I as a teacher tried to accommodate equal opportunity for each participant to talk in discussion and facilitate participants' dialogues by asking for clarification and triggering argument rather than participate in discussion with my own voice.

ANALYSIS OF DISCUSSION DATA

In order to identify and classify critical social practices in the audio- and video- recorded data from group discussions, I drew on

the four dimensions model (Lewison et al., 2002, 2008). To raise trustworthiness, one peer debriefer, who had expertise in critical literacy practices, participated in the analysis process through which we negotiated and reached agreement on identifying and classifying critical social practices in terms of the four dimensions: "Disrupting the commonplace," "Considering multiple viewpoints," "Focusing on the sociopolitical," and "Taking action to promote social justice" (Lewison et al., 2002, p. 382). This article addresses only the dimension of disrupting the commonplace. Table 3 shows the questions used to identify critical social practices as the dimension of disrupting the commonplace.

Table 3.

Questions for the Analysis of Discussion Data

Dimension	Questions for Data Analysis
Disrupting the commonplace	• Do participants critique social/cultural norms, values, beliefs, or assumptions? • Do participants problematize the issues or topics of texts or others' claims? • Do participants question "everyday" ways of seeing? • Do participants use language and other sign systems to interrogate "how it is"? • Do participants question particular reading positions by exploring underlying messages and/or histories that inform constructed meanings?

Note. Most questions were drawn from Van Sluys, Lewison, and Flint's (2006) work (p. 215).

FINDINGS

The dimension of disrupting the commonplace is concerned with problematizing knowledge (Lewison, Flint, & Van Sluys, 2002) and interrogating reading positions which reflect or construct particular values and beliefs of a specific group (Luke & Freebody, 1997). A total

of 17 instances of critical social practices counted as the dimension of disrupting the commonplace. A more in-depth analysis of the instances identified four categories: *using experiential knowledge, using academic knowledge, using speculation, and working cooperatively.*

USING EXPERIENTIAL KNOWLEDGE

In just over half, that is, nine out of seventeen instances of disrupting the commonplace, participants problematized text issues or others' claims using their experiential knowledge including social and cultural background knowledge. This category of using experiential knowledge underpins the need for using students' social and cultural background knowledge in critical literacy practices (Comber, 2001; Heffernan & Lewison, 2003; Janks, 2000; Lewison et al., 2008). Janks (2000) especially highlights the value of fostering diversity in critical literacy education using students' social, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds as its source.

In the following example, Daniela, one of the participants, provided her opinion on the text "America's First People," which addressed the story of European settlement in North America:

> I want to start. For me, It's really sad, this history, because this is my ancestor's story. I'm from South America. All America has this history. All my life, I have lived with this pain in my heart. I'm upset with the Europeans to come here, our land, our people and kill them.

The text's author tried to objectively describe various events taking place around the European settlement in North America without showing any emotional response or value judgment. Daniela engaged in disrupting the commonplace by problematizing European colonization in North America, especially expressing the sadness and anger she felt as a person of a Native American background about the history of this colonization.

> The following example showed how another participant, Yelda, also disrupted the commonplace by problematizing the issue of the text "Gender Roles in the Media," using experiential knowledge:

Yelda: First, I don't like this text. I know. I'm a woman. People use women as an object.

Teacher: Excuse me, you don't like the content of the text, right?

Yelda: Yes, yes. I don't like the content. But I like the explanation of good information about how the media use women as an object. It's good, but the content is bad. Women are used as an object. It's bad but writing is good.

Yelda judged the text itself as good in the sense that it gave useful information about the objectification of women by the media, but on the other hand, she problematized the content of the text by judging such objectification as bad, especially using her life experience as a woman as shown in her statement, "I know. I'm a woman. People use women as an object." Yelda's judgment is underpinned by Stankiewicz and Rosselli's (2008) research study that reveals that about 50% of advertisements in popular US magazines portrayed women as sex objects.

The two participants' responses to the text issues empathizing with the marginalized positions of Native Americans and women echo the distinction between *emic* and *etic* accounts of culture as explained by Headland, Pike, and Harris (1990). They argue that there exist two different views of the world: emic, or insiders' subjective perspectives; and etic, or outsiders' objective perspectives. Because Daniela had a Native American background, she could see the issue of Native Americans from the insider's perspective, leading to her deeper emotional involvement with the story. The use of the terms "our land" and "our people" in the example especially underpins her subjective engagement with the text issue. Similarly, Yelda also viewed the issue from an insider's perspective, as a woman who belonged to the group of all women, empathizing with the women distorted in the media.

USING ACADEMIC KNOWLEDGE

In three instances of disrupting the commonplace, participants problematized text issues or others' claims using their academic knowledge. Participants' academic knowledge is distinct from the category of using experiential knowledge in that the former is learned

through classroom instruction or textbooks and the latter is gained through life experience in social and cultural contexts.

In the following example, Pang, one of the participants, used his academic knowledge of the women's rights movement to problematize the text issue, responding to the question of whether there were any parts of the text "Gender Roles in the Media" that he disagreed with.

> I don't agree with the part [The text "Gender Roles in the Media" introduces one theme underlying the newspaper comic strips in the 1980s, which was investigated in a research study, that is, "If you are a woman and you want a happy home, do not have a career, and if you are a man, never marry a career woman."]. I saw the research year. It's 1983, it's 20 years ago. The time was the beginning of women's right [*sic*] movement. But later we have tried to have a good balance for two decades. So I think this is ridiculous research, so I disagree.

Pang engaged in disrupting the commonplace by critiquing the validity of the research, especially capitalizing on his academic knowledge, that is, the information of time and historical background in relation to the women's rights movement. As shown in the video-recorded data, he expressed disagreement concerning the research by gesturing with his hands in a way that indicated his confidence in his academic knowledge and laughing while pointing out the outdatedness of the research. The claim expressed by Pang, who comes from Taiwan, was affirmed by Chang (2009), who stated that in the 1980s the women's rights movements in Taiwan started to develop through legal reforms and educational initiatives such as the establishment of women's studies programs in national universities.

Scholars of critical literacy (Comber, 2001; Heffernan & Lewison, 2003; Janks, 2000; Lewison et al., 2008) who underscore the use of students' background knowledge in critical literacy practice tend to emphasize the importance of social and cultural knowledge, which I addressed in the category of using experiential knowledge, but they do not clearly refer to academic knowledge. Accordingly, the emergence of this category in the present study is meaningful in that students can use academic knowledge to engage in critical literacy practice,

especially to provide reasons for problematizing text issues or others' claims.

USING SPECULATION

In two instances of disrupting the commonplace, participants used speculation to problematize text issues. In the category of using experiential knowledge or academic knowledge, participants drew on what they had already gained through life experience or instruction to provide a reason for problematizing text issues or others' claims, but in this category participants speculated on what would happen in a given situation, creating a new story rather than using existing knowledge.

In the following example, responding to the question about disagreement with any parts of the text, Yelda used speculation to problematize part of the text "Kellogg's Corn Flakes," which addresses various issues related to Kellogg's Corn Flakes such as how the inventor of corn flakes, Will Keith Kellogg, made corn flakes and what kind of person he was as the company owner:

> I don't like lines 3 to 6 because he left his school at the age of 14 and he had no education. Maybe if he didn't find anything, he could not be a millionaire. And for example, he worked for his brother and he did some odd jobs, small jobs. I don't like this situation. Maybe if he didn't find anything accidently [According to the text, Mr. Kellogg once forgot about his cooking while making some bread with wheat, leading to the invention of corn flakes], he couldn't be a millionaire and he became [*sic*] a poor person.

Regarding the text foregrounding the portrayal of Kellogg as a person who succeeded in business by his own effort rather than by chance, Yelda speculated that without the accidental finding of corn flakes, Kellogg would be poor because his educational and economic backgrounds would not seem to allow such success in society. Yelda's speculation manifested itself in the use of the modal adverbial "maybe" twice to express a probable rather than true event, contributing to moderating the level of commitment to truth (Fairclough, 2003, pp. 170-171). She critiqued the text, creating a new

story which seemed to her to be more plausible in real social situations and providing it as a reason to justify her claim.

In terms of Rosenblatt's (1978) two stances of reading, Yelda's speculation is closely linked with *aesthetic* reading rather than *efferent* reading because whereas in efferent reading the reader pays attention primarily to the information or the concepts he/she gets from the reading, in aesthetic reading the reader's attention is centered directly on "what happens during the actual reading event" (p. 24) so that in aesthetic reading the reader can engage in more active and emotional interaction with a text through imagination.

The example showed that students' imagination needs to be encouraged in critical literacy practice as a way to disrupt the status quo as shown in Greene's (1995) statement, "The role of imagination is not to resolve, not to point the way, not to improve. It is to awaken, to disclose the ordinarily unseen, unheard, and unexpected" (p. 28). By using speculation, they can disrupt the commonplace by creating new stories to problematize text issues; and by taking an aesthetic rather than efferent or information-gathering stance, they can engage in more active and deeper interactions with their texts as critical analysts.

WORKING COOPERATIVELY

In three instances of disrupting the commonplace, multiple participants were involved in problematizing text issues or others' claims by supporting each other cooperatively, especially building on each other's ideas. In the following example, all five participants problematized a text issue cooperatively, discussing the text "Coca-Cola," specifically the issue of keeping the recipe of Coca-Cola secret:

Yelda: I don't like this because here some people keep Coca-Cola's ingredients secret and now you don't know ingredients because it's secret. I don't like this.

Hanan: Do you want to know?

Yelda: Yeah, I want to know because in internet, often times, I hear...

Hanan: "Be careful!"

Yelda: Yeah, "Be careful! This drink has some blood of mouse.

Kiwoo: (It feels like he knows the information) Yeah.

Daniela: Oh, my god!

Yelda: So I don't like this kind of secret. What kind of ingredients in Coca-Cola is important.

Daniela: I can add something. If you put Coca-Cola on . . . , for example on a car or on metal, after one day, twenty-four hours. The metal melts. You can also see something. If you take some beef, put Coke on it and then the beef melts.

Teacher: Where did you get that information? From a newspaper or ...

Daniela: No, on the internet.

Pang: Internet.

Yelda: From e-mails. Some people sent some e-mails.

Teacher: Oh, I see.

Pang: I heard something. He is a friend of my parents. He said that a little brother of my neighbor, he drank a lot of Coca-Cola every day. One day, he was sent to the hospital because he had stomach ache. And he found his stomach had a lot of holes in his stomach. Maybe he drank a lot of Coca-Colas and hurt his stomach.

Yelda, Daniela, and Pang problematized the fact that the Coca-Cola company tries to keep its ingredients secret, providing different kinds of evidence. Whereas Yelda and Daniela cited online resources of Coca-Cola, Pang relayed his neighbor's story as told by his parents' friend. These three participants' narratives, which were different, worked cooperatively to form and validate a counter-narrative to the idea of keeping the recipe of Coca-Cola secret. Yelda's, Daniela's, and Pang's different narratives created *intertextuality* referred to as "the property texts have of being full of snatches of other texts, which may be explicitly demarcated or merged in, and which the text may assimilate, contradict, ironically echo, and so forth" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 84). In the example, the participants' different narratives, which indicated negative effects of Coca-Cola on health and contradicted the idea of keeping the recipe of Coca-Cola secret, were assimilated into

a mutually validated claim. This example shows the need to develop and use intertextual resources in critical literacy practices (Heffernan & Lewison, 2003; Kempe, 2001; Luke & Freebody, 1997) in that different narratives, supporting each other, contributed to disrupting the commonplace, thus strengthening the validity of a counter-narrative to a text issue.

Online resources such as internet and e-mails, which Yelda and Daniela drew on to engage with the text, represent not only popular culture among people in modern society but also popular media, which enable us to create, exchange, negotiate, or learn knowledge. Therefore, popular culture and media can be effective resources for students in critical literacy practices (Falkenstein, 2003; Lewison et al., 2002; Vasquez, 2004). Further, Lewison et al. (2008) argue that a critical literacy curriculum should include a wide range of personal and cultural resources, such as "personal experience; social issues books; popular culture and media; home literacies; textbooks; oral texts; competence in a language other than English; student desires and interests; and community, national, and international issues" (pp. 5-7). These scholars' ideas highlight the value of using online resources as part of students' popular culture and media in critical literacy practices.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In some aspects, my research findings confirmed those of other studies. The category of using experiential knowledge confirmed that the use of students' social and cultural background knowledge can enhance their engagement with critical social practices (Comber, 2001; Heffernan & Lewison, 2003; Janks, 2000; Lewison et al., 2008). This study also confirmed that the use of intertextual resources (Heffernan & Lewison, 2003; Kempe, 2001; Luke & Freebody, 1997) or popular culture and media (Falkenstein, 2003; Lewison et al., 2002; Vasquez, 2004) can promote students' critical social practices.

On the other hand, this research study contributed new knowledge concerning the application of critical literacy in the ESL classroom. First, it revealed that students' academic knowledge, as part of their background knowledge, can also promote critical social practices.

Next, the category of using speculation, which is closely related to an *aesthetic* reading stance (Rosenblatt, 1978), and the category of working cooperatively were identified as new ways of engaging students in the dimension of disrupting the commonplace.

Given its importance in critical social practices, what could be done to encourage more disruption of the commonplace? First, students can be encouraged to problematize text issues or others' claims using their experiential and academic knowledge, in other words, knowledge which they have gained through life experience in social and cultural contexts or learned through classroom instruction or reading. Whereas this study confirmed that the use of students' social and cultural background knowledge can enhance their engagement with critical social practices (Comber, 2001; Heffernan & Lewison, 2003; Janks, 2000; Lewison et al., 2008), it also revealed that students' academic knowledge, as part of their background knowledge, can promote critical social practices.

In this study, Yelda disrupted the commonplace by problematizing unequal treatment of women in the media using her life experiences as a woman. Similarly, Daniela engaged in critical social practice by problematizing European colonization in North America, especially expressing the sadness and anger she felt as a person of a Native American background. On the other hand, Pang capitalized on his academic knowledge of the women's rights movement and statistics to problematize a text issue and another's claim, respectively. To enhance the use of students' background knowledge, including experiential and academic knowledge, teachers can give the students opportunities to pose such questions as "What do you know about the text?" and "What would people think about the text or the topic in your culture?" or to reflect on and perhaps brainstorm or write about their experiential and academic knowledge concerning text topics or issues before engaging in discussion.

Second, students can be encouraged to engage in disrupting the commonplace by using speculation to problematize text issues. I argued that in terms of Rosenblatt's (1978) *aesthetic* and *efferent* stances of reading, engaging in speculation as a critical social practice was closely linked with aesthetic reading, in which the reader pays

attention primarily to the interaction between the writer and the reader as well as the information or the concepts of a given text, the sole focus of efferent reading. In this sense, teachers need to encourage students to actively interact with a text by speculating on what would happen in a given situation, thus creating new stories rather than just trying to get the information from the reading. Further, they can enhance students' critical engagement with texts by encouraging them to change a given story and create a counter-narrative using speculation, possibly leading to the deconstruction of dominant narratives (Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2005).

As one concrete example of this strategy, if the text describes a male as a main character, teachers can ask students to speculate on how they would read it differently if the main character was a woman. Alternatively, students can be encouraged to change various elements of the text, such as story setting, social status of the main character(s), or cultural backgrounds. More actively and artistically, students can write a poem or create and perform a drama based on a new story, such as a counter-narrative. Similarly, Dennis (2009) used drama in her study to enhance both teachers' and students' critical reflection by providing them with the opportunity to recognize and cope with bullying problems involving often marginalized ESL students in a US high school.

Third, students can be encouraged to problematize text issues or others' claims by supporting each other cooperatively, especially building on each other's ideas. As shown in this study, students can use popular culture and media, including online resources such as internet or e-mails, as effective resources to promote their engagement with critical social practices (Falkenstein, 2003; Lewison et al., 2002), not just because each student has different preferences regarding semiotic resources but also because this generation of students is accustomed to using such online resources. For example, Yelda and Daniela worked cooperatively to problematize the idea of keeping the recipe of Coca-Cola a secret by citing different online resources of Coca-Cola as a counter-narrative to the idea. Accordingly, different narratives that the students created worked as intertextual resources by supporting each other and thus strengthening the validity of a counter-narrative

to the text issue (Heffernan & Lewison, 2003; Kempe, 2001; Luke & Freebody, 1997).

One concrete example of this strategy is to encourage students to suggest resources related to issues in the text, such as online resources including web texts, pictures, books, newspaper articles, or magazines that they want to use in the class. A variety of resources brought by students could be used for reading activities to enhance critical social practices such as "reading supplementary texts," "reading multiple texts," "reading from a resistant perspective," or "producing counter-texts" (Behrman, 2006, p. 492). In this case, students could be provided with guiding questions, for example, "What differences or similarities did you find between the content of the text and that of your resource or among those in your group?" By using a variety of resources or sharing resources addressing the text issue from a different perspective, students could work together to disrupt the commonplace.

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